

In the claims:

Please delete claims 1-16 without prejudice to the filing of any appropriate continuation application.

Please add new claims 17-41 as follows:

17. A method for whitening the teeth of a subject comprising the steps of applying to the teeth a composition comprising an alkalizing agent having a pH of between about 7 and about 10, and contacting the teeth with a mixture comprising a hydrogen peroxide precursor compound in an amount effective to whiten teeth.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the alkalizing agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the composition is a rinse, paste or gel.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein the composition is buffered in a manner to maintain tooth surface pH between about 7 and about 10.

21. The method of claim 17 wherein tooth surface pH is maintained at a pH of between about 7 and about 10.

22. A method for whitening the teeth of a subject comprising the steps of applying to the teeth a composition comprising an alkalizing agent having a pH of between about 7 and about 10, and contacting the teeth with a mixture comprising hydrogen peroxide in an amount effective to whiten teeth.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the alkalizing agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

24. The method of claim 22 wherein the composition is a rinse, paste or gel.

25. The method of claim 22 wherein the composition is buffered in a manner to maintain tooth surface pH at between about 7 and about 10.

26. The method of claim 22 wherein tooth surface pH is maintained at a pH of between about 7 and about 10.

27. A method for whitening teeth of a subject comprising the steps of raising tooth surface pH to between about 7 and about 10, and contacting the tooth surface with a peroxide-containing or peroxide releasing tooth bleaching composition.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein the step of raising tooth surface pH includes applying to the teeth a composition comprising an alkalizing agent having a pH of between about 7 and about 10.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein the alkalizing agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

30. The method of claim 28 wherein the composition comprising an alkalizing agent is a rinse, paste or gel.

31. The method of claim 28 wherein the composition comprising an alkalizing agent is buffered in a manner to maintain tooth surface pH at between about 7 and about 10.

32. The method of claim 28 wherein tooth surface pH is maintained at a pH of between about 7 and about 10.

33. A method for whitening the teeth of a subject comprising the steps of applying to the teeth a composition capable of buffering tooth surface pH at between about 7 and about 10, and

contacting the teeth with a mixture comprising a hydrogen peroxide precursor compound or hydrogen peroxide in an amount effective to whiten teeth.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the composition capable of buffering tooth surface pH includes a member selected from the group consisting of potassium phosphate, sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

35. The method of claim 33 wherein the composition is a rinse, paste or gel.

36. A method for whitening the teeth of a subject comprising the steps of buffering tooth surface pH at between about 7 and about 10, and  
contacting the teeth with a mixture comprising a hydrogen peroxide precursor compound or hydrogen peroxide in an amount effective to whiten teeth.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein the step of buffering include applying to the tooth surface a composition comprising a member selected from the group consisting of potassium phosphate, sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the composition is a rinse, paste or gel.

39. A method for whitening the teeth of a subject comprising the steps of maintaining tooth surface pH at between about 7 and about 10, and  
contacting the teeth with a mixture comprising a hydrogen peroxide precursor compound or hydrogen peroxide in an amount effective to whiten teeth.

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40. The method of claim 39 wherein the step of maintaining includes applying a composition including a member selected from the group consisting of potassium phosphate, sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, and ammonium carbonate.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein the composition is a rinse, paste or gel.